In their country there

524 are big nasty yellow-brown hornets (a kind of Belonogaster)
136 which build more or less circular nests, sometimes attaining to the size of a man's head. On a certain day the boys decide to make war on these enemies. They make shields with the leaves of the *nala* palm tree which they plait together.

524 They cut down branches, which they wave to protect themselves, and one of them goes and strikes a heavy blow on the wasps' nest! The irritated insects rush out on their assailants and sting them. The boys try to kill the wasps with their sticks or to crush them when they light on them. Sometimes, overcome by the pain, they run away; sometimes, resisting to the last, they kill and exterminate their winged enemies.

Besides this there are also *big battles between the shepherds* of the different flocks. The shepherds amuse themselves by taking one another's cattle. Those who are the strongest bring the stolen herd triumphantly back to the neighbourhood of their village, but they would never let it enter the kraal. The vanquished call to their help their elder brothers, who come to recover their property and, if they can, give the thieves a sound thrashing!

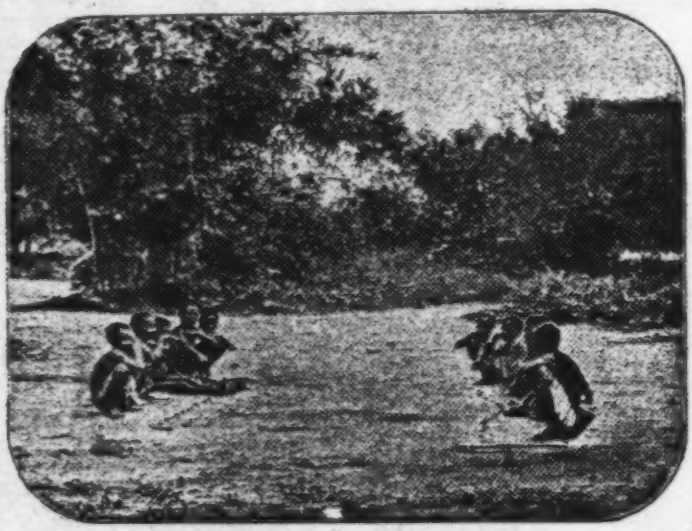
578 Insults and fights are frequent between the clans. The boys
262 of Mpfumu call out to those of Matjolo: " Forest gadders! Eaters
291 of snails and boas, of lizards and tortoises " (all of which are questionable food!) (In Ronga: Balala! Badi ba tihumba ni tinhlaru ni makhwahle ni tinfutchu). Those of Matjolo answer them: " Crowd of women that you are, clad in cotton material! " (Babasati! Matchimbamphela!), in reference to the fact that the inhabitants of Mpfumu, living near the town, some time ago replaced the belt of skins worn by the savages by a piece of cotton tied to the waist and hanging down to the knee (ladula).

855 The custom of frightening children with imaginary beasts is
857 wide spread amongst the Thongas. The bogey man is called
858 *Shingomu-Ngomu* or else *Shikumkunumu*, and by this very expressive
861 word they designate a huge and mighty being who walks, swaying his big body from right to left, with a sound like *ngomu-ngomu*. The ogre is *Shitukulumukumba*, a word coming originally from the Zulus, which corresponds to the Ronga *Ñwambilutimhokora*, that is to say: " the one who has scales on the heart. " He eats

855/538 human beings. These imaginary creatures play a large part in the native tales, especially the one who " has scales on the heart. " He feeds on vermin, lice and big white beetle larvae, which are his almonds (1).

855 When a child cries and cannot be comforted, someone goes and hides behind the hut and slaps his neck saying: "U-u-u," while

[524]



Boys trying to play Billiards
at Magudja's, near Antioka Station.

those remaining with the lamenting little one say to him: " Be quiet, listen! Shikunkununu is coming! "

857 There are also the *timbelembele*, a kind of terrible wasp which only exists in the imagination of children. When a boy does not dare to follow his companions up a tree which they have climbed, they shout to him: " Make haste! Here are the timbelembele coming to bite you! " And he is so frightened that he at once finds strength to climb.

(1) We shall gives complete ogre tale in Part V.

595 Training Institution, asking them to set forth their views frankly on the subject. Most of them were full grown men, some were married, some had been polygamists themselves. I obtained about twenty written answers, and this is the summary of these little essays :

Reasons for :

595 538 1) A Native proverb says : Wansati muñwe a nga yaki muti, i. e. One woman does not build (constitute) a village. This proverb is confirmed by two others : Litiho liñwe a li nusi hobe, i. e. One finger does not bring the cooked grains of maize to the mouth ; and : One single arrow is not able to kill a snake (Ntumbana muñwe a wu psi koti ku dlaya nyoka).

595 2) To have many wives is the glory of the headman of a village. He is honoured in proportion to the number of his wives.

3) The polygamist can thus practise a generous hospitality, each wife bringing her plate of food for the evening meal.

4) If the first wife dies, he is not left alone.

5) If she is ill, he does not want for food.

6) There are many hands to perform the village duties : his many wives help each other.

7) The polygamist has many children.

8) No woman is left unmarried, which is a good thing, because how could the unmarried ones find money to buy their clothing ?

Reasons against :

1) Tshengwe dja kajata, i. e. Polygamy is troublesome... on account of bukwele, jealousy.

What is the source of this feeling ? A husband shows his preference for one of his wives, either by giving her a more valuable present than he gives the others, by visiting her on two consecutive nights in her hut, or, when he returns from a hunting trip, by giving her a better piece of meat, the leg, for instance. This arouses bukwele in the heart of the others, and, when this has once been the case, a trifle will suffice to kindle the fire anew. And how does this feeling manifest itself ? By mutual insults of these women to each other, going as far as accusations of witchcraft. (One of them will exclaim : "O! May my rival die and I remain alone in possession of everything!" This is almost equivalent to an act of witchcraft) ; by insults and menaces to the husband ; by the refusal on the part of the despised one to cook his food and to get in his harvest ; by deeds of violence against his person : (One of the wives of one of the witnesses went so far as to drag him out of the hut of her rival, and they made life so intolerable to him that he

361 together with all the inhabitants of the kraal. The two huts near
313 the entrance are, on the left, the *lao*, where unmarried boys sleep
396 (14) and on the right (15) the *nhangu* where the girls live. Often
356 the nhangu is built behind the huts of the mothers, near the mhala ; in this way the girls are kept under more effective watch. The boys of the *lao* have to guard the door, which they close at night where it is the custom to do so. The *hubo* and the *bandla*, the squares, are generally kept quite clean.

361 In front of each hut is a *yard* (*ndangu* pl. *mindangu*, 23) which
372 is also generally well swept. In the centre of each of these are
417 some broken pots (mapseko), or pieces of hard clay taken from ant-hills (psirubu) ; this is the *fireplace (shitiko)*, where the
351 mistress of the hut cooks her food. The fence round the yard used, as a rule, to be made of poles or even trunks of trees planted near each other and forming a circular wall. Nowadays, especially amongst the Rongas, these yards are enclosed with reeds and may be built square, a single wall fencing off as many as three or four huts. The top of this wall is sometimes crenelated. I rather think this arrangement is modern ; the circular wall of the ndangu
585 is an old custom, as is proved by the following fact. On the day of
338 *hloma*, when the bride's-maids and female relatives bring the bride to her husband, they not only build up the woodpile (shigiyane, see page 112), but, in the northern clans, they must also erect a new ndangu which will be called *tsandana*, and so people will know that in the yard there is a *nhlomi*, a bride, working for her mother-in-law! The ndangu is the place where women tell folk-tales of the tribe to the children and to each other, whilst they attend to their cooking, or after the evening meal.

361 If cleanliness prevails on the square and in the yards, the
356 same cannot be said of the region between the huts and the
235 fence. This is called *mahosi* or *makotini*. It is the place where
351 old baskets and broken pots are kept. The chicken houses
343 (*shihahlu*, 27) are built there ; these are generally little huts, with reed walls, placed on a floor of palmtree boards, supported by four poles forked at their upper extremities. The *ash-heaps* are somewhat further on (24). They are called *tala*, and play a part in certain rites, representing, as it would seem, the place of desolation and of sorrow.

524 but one stone, a poor *tshonga*, he says: "I have only caught women!"

524 127 461 Fighting and hunting are great sports for Natives; hence the popularity of the tshuba game. It has become such a passion with the men that they neglect all their duties to indulge in it, and it has been necessary, in certain Christian villages, to prohibit the tshuba altogether, as the whole male population was abandoning its work for the game!

461 538 517 826 The *evening games* are happily not so dangerous for the moral well-being of the village. Women who have worked the whole day now have their innings. This is the *tha* par excellence, the most refined amusement, the story telling. It takes place at eventide. It is taboo to *tha* in the middle of the day. Those who should transgress the law would become bald (!), and persons affected with loss of hair are commonly and jocosely accused of having told tales at midday. So, when the moon shines, when all the work of the day is ended, all the inhabitants assemble at one of the firesides to amuse themselves. They rarely gather together on the hubo for that purpose, as the square is reserved

524 for the discussion of matters of importance or for dances. The diversions at first consist of a parlour game, which is also known amongst Europeans, *guessing the charcoal piece (mhumhana)*. Two sides are formed opposite each other, women on one side, men on the other. One of the women, holding a piece of charcoal, puts it into the hands of one of the other partners, saying: "Dana, u shura ñwanaaaa'nga," (eat and be satisfied, my child). Then both present their closed hands to the other side saying: "Mhumha!" The man opposite must guess in which hand the charcoal is hidden. He flips one of the four hands with his finger saying: "Give me! Here it is!" If he has guessed rightly, he has won, and then proceeds in his turn to hide the charcoal in the hand of one of his own side. When they have had enough of this game and wish to finish it in the proper manner, *they pull their fingers* and make them crack *(ku ba tindjwati)*. Each of them pulls a finger in turn. The first who is unable to produce a sound is expelled from his side. Then those who have been beaten make faces, as ugly or funny as they can, at their victors; these must

524 keep serious and not laugh. Should they be unable to keep their countenances, their victory is lost!

538 But these games are only a preliminary. The farther we go, the nearer we get to true literature! Now they ask each other *riddles (psitekatekisa)*, simple and antiphonic. We shall study this form of folklore later on... If the second side is unable to give the right answer to the riddle, it asks permission to propose one in its turn and so the intellectual combat goes on until they have exhausted the series of riddles they know. Those who have had the worst of the duel must pay the forfeit by *telling tales (tha psihetana)*. A woman may be present who is a renowned story-teller and she holds the whole company under the charm of her tale for half an hour, perhaps longer... Children shudder when they hear the terrible story of the bogey man! They burst into laughter when she describes the funny tricks of the Hare, or of the frog *Shinana*. They heartily approve when the younger brother, despised by his elders, becomes their saviour and teaches them a good lesson... Thonga folk-lore is very rich; it is one of the most interesting manifestations of the psychic life of the tribe. We shall study it with the attention it deserves in Part V of this work. Here it is sufficient to show what a great and happy part it plays in the life of the village.

E. RULES OF POLITENESS AND HOSPITALITY.

576 The village life is dominated by the *respect for hierarchy*. I do
769 not think this term is exaggerated. Etymologically hierarchy
593 conveys not only a moral but a religious idea. This religious feeling is not absent in the fear felt by a younger brother for his elder, because the elder member of the family is its priest, the only possible intermediary between the family and its gods (See Part VI). So no wonder if, in their relations with each other, though these are extremely free and natural, Natives follow strict rules of etiquette.

643 It is worthy of notice that no sacrifice is offered on this day, neither is any religious ceremony whatsoever performed. The coronation appears to be a purely military affair, a sort of oath of loyalty taken by the people to their chief and by the chief to his people.

C. THE OFFICIAL MARRIAGE OF THE CHIEF.

643 584 The chief being duly installed, the next thing to do is to provide him with his officially recognised wife, *the wife of the country*, she who is to become the mother of the future king. This wife must be bought with the pennies of the people : a characteristic custom demonstrating forcibly to how great an extent the royal family is at once the property and the pride of the nation.

643 584 521 One fine day, says Tobane, when the counsellors go to visit the new chief, they meet with a very cold reception : "Who do you suppose is going to feed you ? Who will cook the meat ? Who is going to brew the beer ?" They return quite crestfallen, but having perfectly understood the allusion. The chief wishes to remind them that the time has arrived for them to find him a wife. This roundabout way of coming to the point is much in vogue with the Blacks. The matter is at first discussed in secret by the brothers and sisters of the deceased ruler, a family council which holds its conclave "in the hut," i. e. privately. After due consultation, a messenger is dispatched to the principal men of the country, to the heads of the younger branches of the royal family (to Khobo, Pulane, Kupane, if Mpfumo be the clan in question) with the following message : "Has not the moment arrived to set up the chief, to cause him to grow, to increase properly ? For the country is sustained by its cock! (1)" The great ones discuss the affair, each in his own village, and a

643 584 538

(1) *Dji yima ni nkuku*, a proverbial expression meaning : as the poultry-yard cannot flourish without a cock, so must care be taken of the chief of the country, in order that he may be able to perpetuate the race and secure the succession.

643 538 177 554 one refuses to be a chief. Thonga tales recounting the story of some one who succeeded wonderfully in life often conclude by saying that this person was given a territory and became a chief... which seems to be the highest reward of virtue or wisdom. Nowadays, however, one may meet with cases where the heir to the chieftainship, having become a Christian, renounces that high position because he feels that there is an incompatibility between the Bantu way of ruling and his new faith.

643 But it would be a great error to think that a Thonga chief is, or can be, an autocratic despot. This may have been the case with Chaka, Lobengula or Gungunyana, when the tribe became an amalgamation of clans held together by military power; in order to maintain their usurped authority, these chiefs had to be cruel despots. But this is a late development in the Bantu political system. I am now only taking into consideration the primitive form of tribal life, which is the clan life.

For a chief dangers may arise from three sources: from his own character, from the Thonga system of government itself, and from the law of succession.

1) The character of the chief.

A chief who wishes to succeed in his government *must have a good character*. If he imposes taxation, he must not use his wealth in a selfish way. For instance, when women bring him a *shirwalo* of a dozen pots of beer, he must give them back one or two to quench their thirst. Moreover he must distribute most of the remaining pots to his men, who are on the *bandla*, always ready to share with him the advantages of his position.

Should he buy oxen with the product of the fines, he will be wise to slaughter one from time to time for his counsellors and for the whole clan. A chief who is good (a ni timpsalu) is said to *maintain* or to *save the country* (bekisa tiko). If he does not do that, he is severely criticised. Mubvesha, who used all his money to buy wives, and prevented all the men from seeing them, whilst he himself was too old to content them, was considered

682 lobola. Viguet explains that this is done according to the old
338 saying of Native law: "Nwombekazi a yi ambi nandju" viz. "a
826 cow which has calved is not used to pay a fine; the calf pays it."
672 (See page 217.) He adds that the ten hoes sent with the girl pay for the ribs of the murdered man. (The Ba-Thonga believe that the human body has only ten ribs!) A case of involuntary homicide
682 is generally not brought before the chief, as the law is well known
643 and no one would try to evade his duty. Should however the
672 murderer not have been on good terms with the deceased, the matter will be discussed before the Court.

If the murder was *deliberate*, it is punished by death.
682 At least such was the law in former times, when Natives still
672 possessed the power of condemning to death. Now the fine is also the remittance of a woman. But owing to the existing hatred, and from fear of being obliged to lobola the relative of the murderer, the family of the deceased does not take the girl. She is sold by her parents and only the money is remitted to the plaintiff. (Mankhelu.)

682 Amongst the Ba-Ronga, when a near relative of the murdered
627 man wishes to avenge himself by killing the assassin, his people prevent him from doing so, in order to bring the matter before the chief. When a man called Mashabe was killed by the son of Gigiseka, Maphunga's brother, the murderer, had to pay £ 20. The fine may be as much as £ 25, but the idea is also to help the bereaved family to acquire a new spouse and, through her, new members. As for the murderer, he is regarded with scorn, and despised by the whole community. For a whole week, he must eat apart. He is unclean. So, at the time of luma bukanye, (page 400), he must also take miluru medicine together with the warriors who have killed enemies; but he does not drink it boastfully, extolling his deed! People say of him: "Look at the murderer!" (Mboza.)

The vendetta, the savage custom which makes it incumbent on the relations of a murdered man to avenge his death themselves at all costs and by any means, is absolutely absent from Thonga custom. It may be said that, as regards punishment of murder, they have reached quite a civilised stage in their judicial

685 343 151 625 has been pulled up and the sand nicely smoothed down, so that any traces of a thief would easily be seen. He will possibly be recognised at once by the trackers, owing to some peculiarity in the marks on the sand, the foot-print of each individual being more or less known ; clever detectives can even ascertain the height and gait of a man from the length of his stride! If there are no peculiar marks in the foot-prints, the trackers will follow them and reach the village where the thief lives. They will perhaps take him by surprise in his hut. If the matter cannot be settled by the headman of the village and has to be brought before the chief, the guilty party will be fined as much as two, three or even five pounds sterling (Tobane) (1).

When detectives have been unable to trace a thief, they assume a philosophical attitude and say : "Only wait. A man who has stolen will steal again, and you will catch him another time!"

643 687 *Revolt against the decisions of the chief's hubo* is very rare. Should any person take the part of a condemned man and encourage him to oppose the decision of the Court, he will be beaten with a shambock on the square of the capital. "U onhi hubo," "he has spoilt the Court!" Moreover he may have to pay a fine of £ 2. (Mankhelu.)

643 835 224 701 *Answer to some of Professor Frazer's questions on Government.* There are no separate chiefs for war and peace. But in time of war the great induna, who is the Commander-in-chief of the army, directs all military operations. — The chief is never required to marry his own sister or daughter. The only similar case of which I have heard, is that of a hunter who must have sexual relations with his daughter before going on a hunting trip (Part IV).

643 778 — The king's mother does not hold any special office.— The chief does not keep any portion of his deceased predecessor excepting the nails and hair used for the mhamba (See page 386 and part VI.)

538 (1) The following interesting couplet in two sentences aptly describes the thief : Shishlungwa rendjeletane ? — The crown on the hut nicely rounded ? Mangatlu a paha ritiho... — The hawk burns his claws... The thief is like a crown on the top of a hut. He is a lazy person, he attitudinises and will not work. Evil will befall him, as with a hawk who tries to snatch the meat that is roasting and burns his claws!

241 221 313 (Dj.), in the bush which has never yet been cultivated, or has been lying fallow for a long time, is very hard work indeed! Beginning in the early morning the woman cuts down the small trees with her axe (khaula, dji-ma); if the stems are too large she lights a fire at their base and leaves them to burn until they fall. Natives have not the slightest idea of the value of trees, if

Tilling the fields near Makulane (Maputju country). *Phot. D. Lanot.*

these trees do not bear edible fruit, and destroy whole forests without any compunction. As previously mentioned, the labourer spares only the nkanye, mphimbi, nkuhlu, etc., and sometimes the mimosa parasol (gowane, Albizzia fastigiata) which provides a beneficial shade for the maize. Then she breaks the soil with her hoe and piles up in heaps the weeds (bibi, dji-ma) and bushes which she has uprooted, leaving them to dry before burning them. [538] This is a long job and requires great patience. The old adage says very truly:

U nga bone bibi u ku ndji timele. (Don't waste your time in looking at your heaps of rubbish, and fancying that your work is done!)

302 The use of ochre is, however, not restricted to nursing mothers or magicians : it is the special province of young marriageable 538 girls, wishing to attract attention : their brilliant skin shines like a 832 mirror, setting off to perfection the white of their eyes and the black of their hair, which is sometimes made flossy by means of antimony or ground charcoal. A quaint saying puts it thus :

> Shindzingeri pundjene ? -Banhwanyana tolan !...
> What says the pretty bird with the coral neck that sings in the grass ?
> It says : Girls, anoint yourselves with ochre ! (if you wish to be as beautiful as it is).

177 Another ornament, of ancient date, is the *bracelet*. There 301 are several kinds : 1) the big heavy copper rings, called *masindana*, which greatly resemble those of the lake-dwellers, having a similar rather oval shape with an opening for slipping them over the wrist ; 2) the modern bracelets, called *busenga*, which the Rongas first bought in Natal, and which the Ma-Lemba introduced in the Northern clans ; they are made of iron wire twined round a ring of hide ; 3) the *mafowa* are more ancient, being made of seeds strung on thongs of skin, and are wound several times round the leg. This is an ornament for either dance or war. 301 The mafowa are sometimes made of the silvery cocoons of Argema Mimosae, the Queen Moth, which are found on nkanye trees, emptied of the chrysalis which is inside and filled with grains of millet which rattle when dancing !

301 *Beads* (nkarara) are evidently of later date ; they were introduced 439 by the Whites in the XVIth century, when the Portuguese were already in regular communication with Delagoa Bay and trafficked with the Natives, exchanging glassware for gold and ivory. Glass fascinated the Blacks : its brightness and transparency pleased 539 them immensely. An old song echoes their simple transports of delight :

> E ! Bashabi ! Batatana ba shabile ; ba buya ni shintshirimana sha balungoooo !..
> Hi ! Here come the buyers ! Our fathers return with their purchases ; they bring back with them the beautiful glittering things which the Whites sell !...

301 "A few years ago an ordinary glass bottle was thought a wonder by the people in the interior," said Timoteo Mandlati to me.

CHAPTER II

THONGA FOLKLORE.

538 Thonga folklore may be said to exhibit three different styles : *didactic* and sometimes *sententious* poetry, in its proverbs and riddles, *narrative* poetry in its manifold tales, and *lyric* poetry in its songs. The two first may be called to a certain extent *collective* or *traditional* : all the riddles or tales are ancient products of the literary activity of the tribe, handed down to the Thongas of to-day by oral tradition. On the other hand, new songs are continually being composed, and bear a much more *personal* or *individual* character. I have given a great many examples of tales and songs, in my "Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga" (324 p.), as well as in "Les Ba-Ronga" (p. 253-363).

My present object is not to compile all the available material, which would be far too long a process, but to give a general idea of Thonga folklore, and to complete my previous study by the publication of some new tales and riddles chosen from those collected since the two preceding works were published. The source is almost inexhaustible, and would suffice for the compilation of two or three volumes. The examples here given will be representative enough to convey a true idea of this rich folklore, and I refer the reader to the two books previously cited if he wishes for more information.

A. PROVERBIAL SAYINGS AND RIDDLES.

Riddles certainly furnish us with a very precious means of gaining an insight into the secret workings of the Native mind, as they form doubtless the quaintest part of their literature, and

that which bears the least resemblance to any portion of our own! I have already quoted some examples of riddles in my first volume, and the obscurity of these sayings has been sufficiently obvious. Without special explanation it would be difficult indeed to discover their meaning. 538

I. *Proverbial sayings.*

As regards *proverbs*, the Ba-Ronga possess a few containing a single statement, as for example :

1) Mumiti wa nhengele a dumba nkolo wa kwe.
He who swallows a large stone has confidence in the size of his throat !

This might be said in any country and will be recognised, at once, as applying to bumptious and pretentious folk!

2) U nga hlaule matjhuna ya mhangela.
One must not point out the male of the guinea-fowl.

Guinea fowls are all alike, male and female. So do not point to one and say : "This is a male." You would be liable to make a mistake, and to be made fun of! This proverb is said to a young husband who might be tempted to prepare the *ntehe* before the birth of his child, which is taboo. (I. p. 46.) Compare this with the proverb : Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.

3) Tinhlange ta le ntjhaku ti tibyiwa hi mutlhabi.
The tattooing marks made on the back are known to the tattooer (not to the tattooed !).

You do not know what may happen when you have turned your back. This warning was given by one of the Church elders, of Lourenço Marques, to a missionary who was leaving on furlough!

4) Matimba ya ngwenya i mati.
The strength of the crocodile is water.

When you are in your own domain you can succeed ; do not try to fight outside it. You would be like "a fish out of water..

5) U nga nwe mati, u seletela nhlobo ; mundjuku u ta nwa kwini ?
Do not fill up the well after having drunk. Where would you drink to-morrow ?

538 Here the sense is at once apparent.

6) Mbuti ya shihaha a yi belekeli ntlhambin.
A good goat does not bring forth in the midst of the flock.

I heard this proverb in one of our Synods. One of the Native members wished to exhort his co-delegates to abstain from giving their advice, and voting precipitately on a certain subject : let us rather go outside, and discuss amongst ourselves, and when we have come to an understanding we will come back and vote as one man!

This last example shows how such proverbs are used... They are sometimes quoted in a low voice, so as to be heard only by those whom it is desired to warn. It is an instance of the *phamba* just referred to.

Compare also the proverb quoted (p. 21) in connection with tilling the fields :

Do not look at the weeds and think : Now ! I have tilled a large field !

Do not be satisfied by mere external appearances! Weeds may be plentiful, yet the field be small!

Hundreds of such sayings might be collected (1), though I do not think they are so extensively used as, for instance, in the Sutho tribe, where M. Jacottet told me he collected a thousand of them. The Thongas replace them by riddles, which seem to be more developed amongst this people than in the neighbouring tribes.

II. *Riddles.*

524 I have already described (I. p. 350) the part riddles play in the games of the Thonga village. The riddle, *mhumhana*, consists first in divining where the piece of charcoal is hidden, and in that

671 538 (1) We might also regard as proverbs, and include under this heading, the figurative terminology used to express the principles of right and justice, which are, as it were, a primitive codification of the common law, and to which I have previously referred — as for instance the curious sentence : A cow which has calved is not used for payin a debt. (I. p. 217).

B. THONGA SONGS.

I. *Thonga poetry and Thonga poets.*

Bantu poetry differs widely from our own! So do Bantu poets from our "literary men." I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of one of them on the same day that I witnessed the crushing down of Mayibane's hut (I, p. 156). Attracted by the big gathering, and knowing that he would have plenty of hearers, and meat to his heart's content, this poet had come to grace the occasion with his presence. He was on a literary tour, going from one village to another, singing his songs and dancing from one end of the land to the other. Tall, his face absolutely clean shaven, his eyes having a kind of absent, semi-conscious look, he at the same time appeared most contemptuous and remained in a state of olympic calm, as if he were a very superior kind of being. He was a man of the Manyisa clan, and all seemed to show him much consideration. When those officiating at the sacrifice were busy cutting open the victim, he appeared in the circle formed by the spectators (see illustration I. p. 159, No. 7), and began his performance. He had put on a skirt of *nilala* palm-leaves and imitated a lame man, assuming an air of intense suffering. Suddenly, with wonderful strength, he began to trample the ground with his feet. He had an assagai in his hand, and feigned to pierce his own side, and his thigh. Then, lifting the weapon, he cast an authoritative look on the throng and those who had been laughing stopped and kept perfectly quiet. He remained immovable, regarding them with an air of supreme contempt, impassible... And then he commenced his song (suma).

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(Chorus) Oho! Oho! (Soloist) Where are you going, mother (See tune No. 1 in the collection of Thonga tunes.)

The throng joined with him in the chorus, which was really very effective. The women clapped their hands in cadence

(wombela) to encourage him. Judging that they did not do this with sufficient vigour, he scooped up a handful of sand and threatened to throw it into their eyes. They clapped with renewed ardour. One of them, the tall, light-coloured one who had sung the obscene songs referred to I. p. 159, came, and with a peculiar smile wrapped a yellow piece of cloth round his loins. He sang other songs, again trampling furiously on the ground, until the sacrificers had finished their work; then he was made to stop, and the prayer to Manyibane began.

This performance was indeed, wonderful, and its interest was in no wise inferior to the funeral ceremonies themselves. It is a typical example of Thonga poetry, where three elements are generally present: the music, the dance and the words, which are more or less poetical.

This Manyisa bard is by no means a unique specimen. I remember having heard, many years ago, a poet of exactly the same type, from Bilene, who visited the Ronga clans, singing everywhere and asking for old rags as his reward. There are professional poets who earn their living by their art. There are also a number of occasional poets, who compose new songs and perform them in their own villages, not aspiring to a world-wide fame. If their tunes are pleasing, they are spoken of by others, and so become known throughout the land, on the strength of their own merit. In this way songs become popular and a great number of them are constantly sung at beer-parties, after harvest, at the feasts, some gradually falling into oblivion and being replaced by new ones each season (1).

In this chapter I shall not treat of th[illegible]ical character of the

(1) I met later a blind minstrel, Mungomana, who earned his living in the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques by giving concerts in the yard of an important Native woman named Nwalanga, at which a number of boys from Inhambane and Chopiland used to stop before leaving for Johannesburg. He accompanied their dances with his timbila (xylophone) and was payed 4.800 reis per month. He told me his story. When quite young he showed a quite unusual gift for music and dancing. He went everywhere where a feast was taking place and boys were trying to outdo each other in dancing and singing, and was always proclaimed first. A woman impressed by his wonderful art, asked him to marry her, but he declined on the plea that he was still too young. Once as he was passing along a field where this woman was at work, she said to him: "If you do not marry me, you shall not live." Frightened by this

533 songs ; that will be considered in the next chapter, in which I
538 intend to publish the forty-one tunes of my collection. Here I shall only consider them as literary products, and in trying to classify them, I have noticed that, though most of them cannot be said to be very elaborate compositions, they pertain to many different styles, lyric, elegiac, epic, dramatic, etc. and, in addition, there are those which are sung while at work, as well as the incantations to animals and spirits. I will give some examples of each of these categories.

II. *Lyric poetry.*

533 Thongas, like most human beings, have felt the need of chanting
539 their joys and sorrows, joining words to music in order the better to express their feelings. These feelings are not as a rule very deep, and their lyrics are rather play than a painful cry of the heart. Here for instance is *the complaint of the childless woman*, who longs ardently for a baby. She has been to other people and asked them to lend her one. But they have refused and only consented to lend her a mortar and a plate. She then sings to a charming melody (Tune 7).

A ba boleki ñwana ! — Ba boleka thuri ni nkambana !
Ngi ndji mangatlu ! — Ngi ndji shimungwe ! — Ngi n'ta ku utla !
They won't lend me a baby ! — They lend me but a mortar and a plate !
Were I an eagle ! — Were I a bird of prey ! — I would carry thee away !

The thousands of young Thongas *who go to the mines of Johannesburg*, to extract the precious auriferous quartz, seem to be quite contented with their fate. They, however, chant their

533 threat he fled to another country, but soon one of his eyes began to swell. His elder
754 brother told him : "You have been bewitched by that woman," and his paternal aunt tried to heal him. She covered him with a piece of cloth, and made him expose his eye to the steam of a certain drug boiled in a pot below. She claimed to have succeeded, having found an ox-tail hair at the bottom of the pot when she poured out the water. This was however a lie. The eye complaint became worse, till he entirely lost his sight. He then devoted his life to music, and composed many songs to accompany the dances of the magayisa (boys going to work.) These songs became popular ; if a boy wished for one of them, his favourite, to be executed, he would willingly pay 200 reis ! — Mungomana is the only Thonga I heard of who used music in his religious rites. I shall give the words of his canticle in Part VI.

meaning than tra-la-la) "They are starving at Ntimane, siloyi..." He was journeying from the Ntimane country, near Khosen, and having heard that the crops had failed, went muttering this great news all down the river! Perhaps the song was not of his own composition, but was an old refrain which had been preserved on account of its catching tune. 533

Mrs Audéoud, during her long journeys on the Maputju river, noted down many of the tunes, Nos. 19-22, some in two or even three parts, curiously harmonised. The Native sailors seek in this way to vary the monotony of rowing, punting or towing the boat. No doubt a great many more such tunes could be collected. [461]

VII. *Incantations.*

Children, as we saw, (I. p. 68), are fond of singing curious little melodies to various animals : to the big *galagala* lizard, to the *chameleon*, to the *crab* with one claw, to the *owl*. The tune of the words addressed to the owl is No. 36.[*] The boys of Rikatla used to salute our ox-waggon, when it appeared on the plain, with song No. 35 :[*] "Gweymanâo! — here are the oxen", they said running all round the span, the girls following them and lifting up the babies in their arms, to show them the strange machine and the long-horned oxen walking slowly, with impassive looks, through the little black throng.

Incantations of a more serious type are the *songs of exorcism*, performed to the accompaniment of rattles, big tins and drums, close to the ears of the person supposed to be possessed, in order to induce the spirit to reveal its name and to " come out". No. 37[*] is one of the most celebrated songs of this category, and has really a great deal of character. I shall speak of it again when dealing with possession. 533 789

VIII. *Songs accompanying tales and games.*

As we shall see, little songs are very frequently introduced into the tales to embellish them, and are generally repeated three or four times over, as if the narrator wished to exhaust 533 538

[*] [Errata: read 31 for 36; read 30 for 35; read 32 for 37. -- Analyst]

533 all their charm. Some are very primitive, like No. 33, the
538 murmuring of a little boy who has been swallowed together with his oxen by an ogre called Nyandzumulandengela ; imprisoned in the stomach of the monster, he entreats him to let him out! Another, more elaborate, is the lament of the mother whose child has been stolen by the Baboon, and who follows the animal weeping and asking it to give the little one back to her. (Tune No. 35.) Tune No. 36 belongs to another ogre tale, concerning the suitors of pretty girls who are really only hyenas transformed into men. Some one knows their true nature, and forces them to appear as they really are, by chanting their song :

Manyange, the leg belongs to me !

the song in which they dispute with each other about the leg of the girl they are wooing! The most complicated of these songs is that in the tale of Zili (No. 34) ; it is a duet, and was sung to me by two Mpfumo girls so distinctly that I could easily take it down. It is very interesting as an illustration of the laws of harmony amongst the Thongas.

C. FOLK-TALES.

538 Folk-tales are by far the most interesting and valuable part of the Thonga Folklore, and before citing any new examples of those curious and charming stories, I shall try to show their importance in the Life of the Tribe, their literary, ethnographic and philosophic value.

I. *The place occupied by Folk-tales in the Life of the Tribe.*

538 In Vol. I. p. 350, we have seen the inhabitants of the village,
517 after their evening meal, gathered round the fireplace, devoting themselves to innocent amusements ; first, guessing the piece of charcoal, pulling their fingers, asking each other riddles, — those

who are beaten in the contest having to pay a forfeit which they redeem by telling a tale. So the tale is the conclusion of the game, the object of the whole entertainment. I have often seen exactly the same order followed in a European company playing parlour games. 538 517

This interesting scene may be witnessed from one end of the tribe to the other: "This is their evening prayer" said one of our converts to me, a woman who was also a clever story-teller, i. e. as we Christians have our worship every night before going to sleep, so the heathen gladden their hearts by their tales. Everywhere story-telling (ku tha psihitana) is considered the most refined and most pleasing of the games. The tales are called *shihetana* or *nsingo* (mu-mi) in Ronga, *ntyeketo* (mu-mi) or *nkaringana* (mu-mi) in the Northern clans.

Story-tellers are of all ages and of both sexes. I have heard little girls of ten amusing their play-mates with tales. Those I have collected were told by young girls of eighteen (Nkulunkulu and Ñwanawatilo), young men of twenty, (Khwezu, Maganyele, Simeon Makwakwa), and men of thirty and forty (Spoon, Jim Tandane); but the majority come from adult women, the most skillful being Shigiyane-Camilla, Sofia Midomingo, Martha and Lois. Some only know one tale, and repeat it on every occasion, like Jim Tandane, who used to narrate the story of an ogre, Ñwatlakulalambimbi, with such gusto that he was surnamed after his hero! But others can recite six, ten or twenty tales. Shigiyane, for instance, could entertain the company for many nights with her tales, some of which were very long. (See for instance "The little hated one," 24 pages, "Mubia, an ogre tale," 19 pages, in my *Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga*). This woman's memory was wonderful, and the graceful manner in which she told her stories was no less astonishing. Nkulukulu had heard *her* tale ("The girl and the whale") only once in the Maputju country, and she had memorised it immediately with the little songs which enliven it. 538

Strange to say, there is a curious precaution to be observed in connection with story-telling: it is taboo to devote oneself to this occupation at noon; it must remain an evening entertainment; if this rule is not followed, the transgressor will become bald! 538 461 826

538 461 if this rule is not followed, the transgressor will become bald! This is one of the most surprising of the lesser taboos of the tribe. What is its origin? Have the Natives noticed that famous story-tellers, those who practised their art day and night, were liable to this misfortune? I could get no information on this point. I rather think the prohibition comes from the fact that this game is so popular that they are afraid to devote too much time to it: people would lose all inclination for work, if they started it during the day. So they instinctively forbade story-telling in the day-time!

[142 538]

Phot. A. Borel.

Martha, a Ronga story-teller.

Another curious custom in connection with tales is this: when a story-teller comes to the end of his tale, he concludes with the following words: "Tju-tju... famba ka Gwambe ni Dzabana!" — "Run away, go to Gwambe and Dzabana." These two personages are believed, at least amongst the Northern clans, to have been the first man and the first woman (see Part VI), and I suppose that the object of this kind of incantation is to prevent the marvellous story haunting the hearers during the night, and troubling their sleep by disagreeable dreams. It is a means of returning from fairyland to the realms of every-day life! All these details tend to show the importance of folk-tales in the Native life, and their popularity amongst the tribe.

II. *Classification of Thonga Folklore and its literary value.*

538 But of what does this folklore consist? How does it happen that men, girls, youngsters, will sit quietly for hours, listening to an old woman who keeps them under the spell of her tale? In reality, these products of primitive imagination are much more varied than would at first appear. Let us open the casket, whose key is kept by Gwambe and Dzabana, and make an inventory of the "treasures" of this lore, to use the words of the Rev. E. Jacottet in his publications regarding the Ba-Sutho.

It would certainly be pretentious to apply a strictly philosophical, or even literary, classification to our tales. It is, however, obvious that they present many different styles which are, it is true, often combined, but between which it is quite possible to differentiate.

1) The first and most noteworthy class is that of *animal folk-tales*, in which the "Romance (1) of the Hare" takes a prominent place; the Hare, the Tortoise and the Small Toad are seen playing clever tricks upon huge beasts such as the Elephant, the Lion, the Hippopotamus and even upon men, getting the better of them by their cunning.

2) In a second category, the same idea of the victory of the small over powerful enemies is illustrated by stories in which human beings, children, the miserable and despised, triumph over their elders and those who hate them. The type of such tales, amongst ourselves, is Cinderella. Thongas have a number of similar stories, which I would entitle *the wisdom of the little ones*.

3) The third category comprises the *Ogre tales*, where the triumph of the wisdom of feeble creatures over these horrible and cruel monsters is again celebrated.

4) Other tales, to which I may give the name of *moral tales*, are stories which are evidently intended to enforce some moral teaching. The moralising aim may be unconscious, but the

(1) I employ the term *Romance* in the same sense as the corresponding French term is used when speaking of the "Roman du Renard", the celebrated series of deeds performed by Reynard the Fox, the well-known example of mediaeval literature.

538 conclusion of the tales is unquestionably moral, showing, as it does, that bad deeds or bad characters meet with due punishment.

5) Another variety of stories of this kind, though they are called tales and told as such, seems based on *actual facts* which happened somewhere, and have been preserved in the memory of the tribe. But they are not regarded as actual historical traditions. As they are told for the entertainment of the hearers, no difference is made between them and ordinary tales. They cannot be called legends, a legend being an historical fact, transformed by the popular imagination, and held as such by those who narrate it. They are rather the contrary of legends, being regarded *as purely imaginative*, while the facts seem to be more or less historic.

6) The last category of Thonga folk-tales are the *foreign tales*, which have come from Moslem, Portuguese or English sources, but have been altered in a very curious way, thus affording interesting material for the study of the Native mind. Foreign infiltrations can be detected even in those tales which bear most distinctly the Bantu stamp, but in this last category, they seem to constitute the actual subject matter of the story.

These six classes, once more, are by no means sharply defined. One tale might be placed in two or three of them. An animal sometimes appears in a tale where the other actors are all human. Though animal folklore is generally absolutely devoid of moral purpose, a moral idea may be detected in some of the episodes, for instance, when we see the Elephant punished for having contemptuously crushed the spawn of the Small Toad, etc.

The literary value of these stories varies greatly according to the story itself, and to the narrator. Some tales are very short and insignificant, or they may be a hap-hazard collection of episodes without any plan. Others are *true compositions* in which there is order and design, a position is taken up and a conclusion reached. I recommend the perusal of the "Epic of the Small Toad" and the story of the "Little Hated One," in *Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga*. They are amongst the best and most elaborate examples of Bantu folklore, and show real literary talent. Very often, as already mentioned, *a little song* or several little

songs form the framework of the story. They are repeated at least three times, the story-teller arranging his narrative in such a way that the refrain recurs again and again. Native speakers do not fear repetition ; they seem to think that to hear a catching tune once only is not sufficient, and that upon a second or third occurrence it will be more appreciated. So they make a real art of repetition. While it may make the recital somewhat monotonous, this literary procedure is by no means tedious. Some one once said to me, after having heard the tale of Nabandji, the toad-eating girl : "I should never have thought there could be so much charm in monotony!" 538

As regards the *narrators*, they also vary greatly. Some of them, the beginners, are dull, slow, and tedious. They mingle the episodes without any order, frequently assuming that things are known which have not before been mentioned. But others are full of life, and one feels a true literary pleasure in listening to them. It was a real treat, for instance, to hear Shigiyane, Spoon, his wife, and Simeon Makwakwa! Their gestures, their mimicry, their play of feature, the wealth of descriptive adverbs introduced into the narrative, added a great interest to the story. They imitated little children, or old people without teeth, with great effect. I even saw Spoon's wife have recourse to *imitative action* in order to increase the charm of one of the songs, No. 36, a kind of incantation by which deceitful suitors are transformed into hyenas. This song, according to the story, was sung by a woman whilst grinding her mealies. So Magugu brought with her an earthen-ware mortar, and vigorously worked with her pestle each time the song was repeated. The listeners seemed to take great delight in this performance.

III. *The Ethnographic Value of the Tales.*

When asked the origin of the tales they tell, Thongas invariably say : "These are old stories which we heard from our fathers. No one would dream of inventing a tale now-a-days." This assertion is certainly true. Bantu tales are very old. It is not without good

538 cause that story-tellers, when afraid of being haunted by the harrowing details, send them back to Gwambe and Dzabana, the first man and the first woman!

Another fact confirms the testimony of the Natives, and shows, at the same time, the ethnographic value of the tales. It has been noticed when comparing tales collected in various parts of South Africa, that there is a great similarity amongst them. Bantu folklore, whatever may be the differences met with amongst the tribes, possesses a true unity. More than that : this similarity is found in the folk-tales of all mankind. A number of stories seem to be found from one end of the planet to the other. Reviewing my book *Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga* in the *Revue des Traditions populaires* of June 1898, Mr. René Basset, who is perhaps the greatest authority in this domain, showed that certain episodes written in Lourenço Marques, at the dictation of a Ronga story-teller, were to be found in the folklore of the ancient Greeks and Romans, of the modern Germans, French, Greeks, Italians, Lithuanians, Siberians, Kirghizes, Indians ; in Brazil, Portugal, the Punjab, Scotland, Roumania, Guatemala, British Guiana, Morocco, etc! This is a truly wonderful phenomenon and it is very difficult to account for it. Three explanations may be given of the fact, which is one of the most interesting problems of Ethnography :

1) These stories belong to primitive humanity, and all the races carried them with them in their migrations.

2) There was, in a more or less remote past, direct contact between the various human races, by means of which the tales have been transmitted from one tribe to another, in such a way that, in the course of time, they have spread all over the world.

3) There is such a similarity in the mentality of the various races, when still in the primitive phase of their development, that they have all invented the same stories independently of each other. Hence the unity of folklore everywhere.

I do not think any one of these explanations excludes the others. There is probably a portion of truth in each of them. The difficulty is to define that portion exactly, and this cannot be done until we have more material at hand. For South Africa

we have already a great deal of information owing to the work of Callaway, Theal, Torrend for the Zulu-Kafirs, Bleak and Mrs Lloyd for the Hottentots and Bushmen, Casalis, Arbousset, Jacottet for the Ba-Sutho, and my own for the Thongas. But there is still more to be collected. I am under the impression that, having now collected about fifty Thonga tales of different lengths, amounting to a total of 300 pages, in-8vo size, I possess only a fifth, or perhaps a tenth part of the whole folklore of our tribe!

However, Science cannot wait until all the tales have been reduced to writing and published. It will try to come to a conclusion as soon as possible, and perhaps the best plan would be to restrict the field of investigation, and to investigate thoroughly one, at least, of the regions of this vast land. That is the suggestion I would take the liberty of making to my fellow-inquirers in the field of Bantu folklore. Let us choose a characteristic portion of it, for instance, that which I have called the "Romance of the Hare", which is more clearly defined than any other section of this primitive and oral literature. Let all the episodes of this long story be first published in a form which may be regarded as typical, preferably in the form in which they are found in any one given tribe ; let a short résumé of each be made and assigned a distinguishing number by which it will henceforth be known. Then let a folklorist, if he has the necessary time and information at his disposal, make the following investigation : — In which tribes are these episodes met with? How do they differ from the typical version? Do they appear outside Africa (amongst American Negroes, for instance)? This inquiry would throw light on many important points, viz., what is strictly Bantu in the "Romance of the Hare", and what is common to other races? Are there episodes which belong to one tribe only, to a group of tribes only, or to tribes widely separated from each other? To what extent do the wording and the content differ? Are there not new episodes invented, possibly unconsciously, in recent times by Native story-tellers? I think, that when this was done important conclusions might be drawn which would greatly assist Ethnography in the solution of this problem, and of many questions bearing on primitive humanity.

I hope later to publish the résumé and classification, of the 56 episodes of the " Romance of the Hare ", which I have collected. I may be able to make this collection more complete, as I know that a num-

000 ber of other stories are told about the "Wily Trickster", as the Thongas call him! This attempt may serve as a starting point for the inquiry which I propose, and should this inquiry ever be conducted on an extended scale, under the auspices of the S.A.A.A.S., for instance, and the result be published in its Journal, the Science of Folklore would certainly greatly profit by such an undertaking.

538 The antiquity of the tales is beyond any doubt: they are certainly, very old. This antiquity, however, is only relative: that is to say they are constantly transformed by the narrators, and these transformations go much further than is generally supposed, further even than the Natives themselves are aware of. After having heard the same stories told by different story-tellers, I must confess that I never met twice with exactly the same version. First of all *words* differ. Each narrator has his own style, speaks freely and does not feel in any way bound by the expressions used by the person who taught him the tale. It would be a great error to think that, writing a story at the dictation of a Native, we possess the recognized standard form of the tale. There is no standard at all! For this reason I cannot attribute any great importance to the *texts* of the tales. They are examples of the language as spoken by so and so in such and such a district, and therefore have a linguistic value, just as any report or address they may make or deliver. But they are by no means stereotyped texts, transmitted as such from old times. The words of the songs, which occasionally accompany the narration, are probably the most ancient and stable element of the tales. They are often half Zulu in those of the tales which have been borrowed from the neighbouring tribe, and contain archaic expressions. Some sentences also, especially when they are quotations, have the same character and are reproduced by different narrators in an identical form ; for instance, when the Small Toad, Shinana, deposits its eggs on the road and says, as a kind of challenge : "Let the passer-by pass. If he crushes them, let him crush them. If he spares them, let him spare them". I heard this sentence repeated in almost exactly the same terms by two Thongas, one from Khosen, the other from Rikatla. But these fixed elements are rare and, as a rule, Natives change the words with the greatest freedom.

The same may be said with regard to *the sequence of the episodes*; although these often form definite cycles, it is rare to hear two narrators follow exactly the same order. They arrange their material as they like, sometimes in a very awkward fashion. The tricks of the Hare are sometimes attributed to the Small Toad. In Zulu folklore they are all given as the deeds of a dwarf, called Hlakanyana. I have heard Natives mixing up elements of totally different styles. For instance, in the ritornello of the "Hare's Hoe", which will be found later on and belongs to the animal or semi-animal folklore, the conclusion is borrowed from the well-known episode of the "Year of Famine", which belongs to the class of moral tales (or tales originating in an historic event). New combinations thus constantly take place, sometimes absurd when the literary sense is lacking.

I will go further: *New elements* are also introduced, owing to the tendency of Native story-tellers always to apply the circumstances of their environment to the narrative. This is one of the charms of Native tales. They are living, viz., they are not told as if they were past and remote events, in an abstract manner, but considered as happening amongst the hearers themselves, the names of listeners being often given to the heroes of the story, which is, so to speak, forced into the frame of everyday life. So all the new objects brought in by civilisation are, without the slightest difficulty, made use of by the narrator. He speaks of rifles and guns, of square houses and of clothing, which were not dreamt of by the ancient authors of the tales, and that not only in tales which are distinctly of foreign origin but also in those which are thoroughly Bantu. Thus Magugu, Spoon's wife, in her tale about the hyena-suitors, which otherwise has a strongly Bantu character, concluded by making the girl, the heroine of the story, come to the Missionary Station to be married in the Church! There is not the remotest shadow of historic or ethnographic criticism in the minds of Bantu story-tellers: hence the changes which are constantly deforming old traditions.

Lastly, my experience leads me to think that, in certain cases, the *contents of the stories* themselves are changed by oral transmission, thus giving birth to numerous versions of a tale,

538 often very different from each other and sometimes hardly recognisable. See, for instance, the splendid tale of Zili which I now publish : a man kills his wife and cuts her flesh into strips which he gives to his relatives-in-law to eat. A bird reveals his crime by a little song ; he is found out, and put to death with his whole family. The theme is very popular, and forms one of the most typical moral tales. I possess a version of the story in which it is the wife who calls her parents and, with their help, kills her husband, because he ill-treated her. They cut off the flesh and hang it in strips on the fence of the village. The husband's mother comes to pay a visit to her grandson, and they give her the poor man's flesh to eat. She stays in the village many days, wondering why they feast her with meat of which they do not partake. When she expresses her astonishment, they say to her : "We kept it for you!" When returning home, having taken a supply of meat with her, the old woman hears a bird singing :

Tsenengu! tsenengu! There is one who fell down!
He fell down on the square of the village,
His flesh hangs and swings;
It is that which you carry on your head.

This song is totally different from that in Zili. The bird repeats it until she understands the words, and then she cries :

My son! Alas! Alas!

The source of the two stories is evidently the same, but how great are the differences between them! Such alterations have evidently taken place, and are still taking place, every day in Bantu folklore.

How far can these alterations go? To answer this question I would ask my readers to study the charming tale which I have called the "Epic of the Small Toad" (*Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga*, p. 109). What I call the Small Toad is not our little European green frog but a curious Batrachian, the Breviceps mossambicus, in Ronga the *shinana*. It can swell up to double its natural size and cover itself with an exudation which keeps its enemies away. It buries itself in the ground during the winter, and comes out in spring. This interesting little animal is, in the Ronga folklore,

the equal of the Hare, and even surpasses it. Some of its great deeds are the same as those well known in the "Romance of the Hare." The Small Toad begins by killing an antelope by its tricks, and uses its horn as a trumpet to deceive the other beasts. This brings about a fight between the Small Toad and the Hippopotamus, followed by another between it and the Elephant, which has wilfully crushed its eggs. The Small Toad, accompanied by the Chameleon, forges assagais, kills the Elephant, and all the beasts make their submission. So it becomes a Great Chief. It would seem that the presence in the sandy country of Delagoa Bay of this kind of Batrachian with its curious habits, coupled with the example of the Ngoni chiefs who subjugated the clans of the coast by warlike expeditions, has given birth in our tribe to a new modern type of folklore, the type of the Breviceps : all the tricks previously and still told of the Hare are attributed to it, though it keeps its own definite character, viz., that of a warrior. If this be true, there has been a *real creation*, though most of the elements of the "Epic of the Small Toad" were previously in existence. 538

In conclusion I would say : — The Bantu tales are very old, at least the material of which they are formed is very ancient. But they are still plastic matter unconsciously undergoing constant and extensive modifications in the hands of the story-tellers. These facts are interesting, as they show the conditions of literary production amongst uncivilised tribes. This production is *essentially collective* : tales are not created on all sides by individual authors ; but they are modified, altered and enriched, as they are transmitted from one person to another, from one tribe to another, from one race to another, to such an extent that new types, new combinations, are adopted and a true development takes place (1). This is obvious if, in addition to these transform-

(1) To illustrate this theory, I published in *Folk-Lore*, Dec. 1924, an article under the title ; *La Genèse des Contes Africains : ou comme quoi les Noirs inventent des Contes sans le savoir.* The reader will find in it three tales differing widely from each other. Yet they are inspired by the same fundamental idea which is frequently met with in Bantu Folklore : "Accept the advice of old, despised people, and do not have confidence in yourself". The present conditions of the country round Delagoa Bay may very well explain the transformation of the old Bantu story and it is quite possible to take the view that these three tales have after all the same origin.

538 ations, that which I have called the fifth category really exists, viz., if it be true that facts which really happened are told in such a way that they come to be classed amongst the fabulous. So it is quite possible that the impression shared by all the story-tellers that all the tales are ancient, that the era of creation has passed, is after all erroneous or, at any rate, only relatively true. A development is still taking place and has perhaps never been more active than now. If this is correct, the hypothesis of Callaway, that our tribes have passed through a stage of greater literary production than is now apparent, cannot be maintained.

IV. *The Moral and Philosophical Value of the Tales.*

In some of the Thonga tales the moral lesson is so clear that I did not hesitate to place them in a special category, the moral tales. They are as wide-spread as the others. I do not pretend that those who tell them have a moral purpose. But the teaching naturally arises from the narratives, and it would be worth while studying them to extract therefrom a kind of code of Native elementary morals. In them we see just punishment following on faults, such as : the *curiosity* of Namashuke (Chants et Contes, p. 22) ; the *jealousy* of Mutipi's friends (p. 158) ; and of Longoloka (Les Ba-Ronga, p. 327) ; *the obstinacy* of Sidiulu's wife ; the *unkindness* of an elder sister (p. 229) ; the *presumption* of a younger sister (p. 337) ; the *disobedience* of Halandi (p. 242) and of the elder brother in the "Disobedient child and the Snake ;" the *self-confidence* of a man who marries against his parents' will (p. 246) ; the *laziness* of the wives (p. 257) ; the *selfishness* of the husband (p. 260) the *homicide* of Zili. On the other hand we also see *kindness rewarded*, and also *pity*, in a tale not yet published, told in connection with that of The disobedient child (1).

(1) After having told how the little child saved his disobedient brother, (see later), the narrator goes on with a totally different story which, originally, had certainly no connection with the other episode. During the famine, the child who was now several years older, went away to another country. A headman received him, and ordered one of his wives to take care of him, but she refused, saying that her own children had nothing to eat. All the others did the same except one, who consented to feed him.

538

The animal folklore and Ogre tales seem to be absolutely devoid of such moral lessons. But, as we have already pointed out, they are all more or less illustrations of the triumph of wisdom over mere brute force. This seems to be the root idea of all this folklore, and is not this indeed a highly moral and philosophical idea?

To illustrate this very interesting argument, the story-tellers, in the first instance, narrate the doings of the animals, choosing for the heroes of their tales the smallest and most defenceless. Thus we have the Hare, the cunning trickster, up to all sorts of dodges ; the Small Toad, cold and calculating, the Chameleon, with its crafty prudence. The same idea runs through the group of stories which I have called "the wisdom of the little ones ;" those who were thought to be dullards, the disinherited, and the hated, end by succeeding in life better than their persecutors, of whom they often become the benefactors. On the other hand the Ogres, as representing brute force and all that is merely material, are defeated, are punished for their misdeeds and are generally cut open (to provide an exit for the victims they have swallowed!). So the exaltation of wisdom or goodness is clearly noticeable in almost all the tales, and even foreign tales seem to show, beneath a more or less exotic colouring, that they owe their origin to the same idea. The African story-teller undoubtedly endeavours, above all, to interest his hearers by picturesque, laughable or sensational narratives : but, consciously or unconsciously, he is certainly doing work the philosophical bearing of which is undeniable.

Why does this theme of the triumph of wisdom over strength reappear so frequently and under so many aspects in this popular literature? Doubtless because the thought is natural and eminently satisfying to the mind of man. It underlies our fairy tales of *Cinderella*, *Hop o'my thumb* and many other European

The child sowed seeds of all kinds and, his enchanted hoe having tilled large fields in a moment, a splendid harvest was the result, and the store houses of his adopted mother were well filled. The others said : "If we had only accepted him!" On his way home, he killed an army and took their assagais, killed a troop of merchants and seized their loads of goods, killed all his relatives and took their hoes,—an episode which resembles that of the conclusion of Mutipi's tale. (Chants et Contes p. 160.)

538 fables and stories. But may there not have been, in regard to the African tribes, some special circumstances which contributed to the development of this idea, and impelled them to give vent to it in a hundred different ways?

538 181 Among the Bantus, the Chief is all powerful. Surrounded by Counsellors, protected by warriors always ready to do his bidding, he is an autocrat with power of life and death over his subjects, especially where the primitive clan has evolved into a confederation of tribes united by military power. If the Bantu clan is in a sense democratic, the hierarchy is, nevertheless, all powerful in its midst. Before the Chief and before the invincible custom of which he is the representative, every one bows and trembles. In every village the headman possesses similar power over his subordinates, and elder brothers reign as despots over the younger. From the top to the bottom of the social ladder the strong dominate over the weak and combine, in a wonderful way, to assure the submission of the inferior. In the evening, round the fire, the women and the children take their revenge in the Black man's usual way, i. e., by saying what they think in a round-about manner. They do not try to upset the existing state of affairs. Far from it! But they take a malicious pleasure in telling of the clever tricks of the Hare and his associates! Why? Because Mr. Hare represents the little one, the subject, the ordinary private individual, who has received no special advantages, either by birth or from nature, and yet who, by his own personal wit or common sense, gets the better of the great ones of the community and even of the chiefs. Is it a mere coincidence that three of the tales I have collected conclude with the death of a chief brought about by the machiavellian astuteness of that rascal, the Hare? Or, sometimes, it is the youngest sister who figures in the story; the despised one, covered with a loathsome skin disease; the insignificant little goat-herd; the son of the neglected wife; all of whom accomplish great deeds, entirely unexpectedly.

538 I see in these stories, as it were, a discreet protest of weakness against strength, a protest of spiritual against material force; possibly they may contain a warning to those in power from those

who suffer. And who knows if their ultimate object be not to assert the value of the individual amongst this down-trodden people where the individual counts for nothing? If this is so, then African folklore possesses a greater and more philosophical value than would appear at first sight. In the collective state of human society it represents an aspiration to a state of things where the individual will have his due place. In this way, it is prophetic. It can no longer be classed merely as an amusement for old women during the long evenings, or as a more or less intellectual parlour-game : it is a monument upon which the soul of the race has recorded, unconsciously perhaps, its ideas and its aspirations. It is thus doubly worthy of our study.

The scope of this book does not allow me to publish more than one or two tales of each category, and I must also abstain from any technical comment upon them, leaving the work of annotation and comparison to professional folklorists. My aim is to describe the South African tribe, and they constitute a sufficient illustration in themselves of its psychic life.

V. *Animal Folklore.*

I have published nearly thirty episodes of the Romance of the Hare in the works already referred to ; those which I collected in later years form three cycles : that of the *Wily Trickster*, a collection of episodes told by Martha and heard by her in the Maputju country ; the most noteworthy of these describe the victory of the Hare over the Lion ; *the Hare and the Lion*, told by Simeon Makwakwa of Bilen, containing episodes quite different from those of the first cycle ; *the Hare and the Baboon*, written for me by one of my pupils, Mbike Dzengen from Khosen, a very amusing story also known in Bilen with some variations. To these three cycles I have added the story of the *Hare's Hoe*, a curious specimen of a popular literary genus, the ritornello, or anadiplosis not frequently met with in Bantu folklore.

[See at. 116, pp. 226-275 for texts of folk-Tales]

villages of the living. No woman, and no uterine nephew is buried in the official cemeteries. 764 769

These woods are taboo. It is forbidden to gather fuel there, to cut down any tree, or to allow the bush fire to enter them. Should anyone have imprudently set fire to the grass in the neighbourhood, and be unable to extinguish the blaze, and should the fire thus pass over a grave, he must provide a goat for sacrifice, in order to "extinguish" (timula) the sacred wood. All entry is strictly prohibited except to the guardian of the wood (mutameli wa ntimu), the priest, who is the descendant of the gods of the forest. He goes there from time to time, to offer the sacrifices. He penetrates into the dense foliage by a narrow path, hardly perceptible. I have often visited one of the most celebrated woods, that of Libombo, two miles east of the Rikatla station. The old Libombo chiefs were buried there, and Nkolele, the proprietor of the forest, was very proud of it. He asserted that Mahazule, the chief of Nondwane, belonging to the reigning family of Mazwaya, whose forefathers had conquered the land of Nondwane, feared the spot and, in order to avoid it, took a circuitous route to Lourenço-Marques, or, if forced to take that road, stopped near the wood to pay his respects to the old chiefs buried there. I did not see anything remarkable in that wood. Forcing my way through the bushes, brambles, and creepers I at length came to a sort of tumulus, but very slightly raised, on which were to be seen some dried leaves of maize, the remains of offerings placed there some time previously. The young man who acted as my guide — considerably against his inclination, I fancy, — turned away his face, with a terrified expression, when we came upon this grave. In another spot I found some other tombs. Snakes thrive, naturally, in these thickets, where they are undisturbed, but I did not see any on that occasion. No mausoleum has been built over any of these venerated sepulchres ; a few pieces of old blackened pottery were all we saw — the remnants of the jugs and plates belonging to the deceased, which were broken on the spot after his death. 778

The dread in which these sacred woods are held by the Natives is certainly not due to any unusual objects they may have seen 769 778 538

769 there. It is inculcated, and kept alive, by the truly terrifying tales
778 which are told concerning them. These are related in the evening,
538 in low tones, and with frightened looks, and the feeling of awe is
776 fed and maintained by these legends. I intend to narrate here those I heard from various informants ; these stories will illustrate better than any philosophical explanation the ideas of the Natives concerning their gods. Those connected with the Libombo wood are the most typical. I owe them to Spoon and the aged Nkolele. I will begin with those which are of most ancient origin, and whose legendary character is most unmistakable.

539 One day a woman was passing close by the forest of Libombo : she
776 plucked a sala (p. 16) from a tree and ate it, after which she went to till
769 her garden. On another occasion, just as she was cracking another sala against the trunk of a tree before eating it, she saw that the fruit, instead of having a stone inside, was filled with small vipers. She threw it away, but the vipers said to her : "Go on! Eat away! Haven't we seen you every day picking sala? And these sala are ours, and not yours. What shall we gods have to eat? Have we not made this tree to grow?" And she went home and died, because she had been cursed by the gods.

Another woman was passing by the forest on a rainy day, and saw a child, who had climbed a tree, and was eating berries. She approached the child and said : "Give me some of those berries!" The boy made no reply, so she began to pick some for herself. When she had picked enough, she said : "Are you going on picking berries in such a rain as this! Where is your mother?" He still remained silent. She felt sorry for the child, thinking he was indeed to be pitied : — "Come," said she, "and let me carry you on my back." So she went up to the tree, and lifted down the child, and tied him on her back with her shawl ; then, putting her conical basket on her head, she started for home. On arriving at her hut, she saw that a fire had been lighted on account of the rain. — "Put on some more wood," said she, "for the sake of this little one, whom I found on the road eating berries." She untied the shawl, and tried to place the child on her hips, but he refused to be moved, and clung to her back, where he kept quite still. The folks said to the woman : "Put him down on the ground, so that he can go and warm himself near the embers." He refused. Then they said to him : "Get down!" But he still refused to move. Then the villagers said to the woman : "Didn't you pass by the Libombo forest?" — "Yes! I did," she replied, "and there I found this child gathering berries, and

biha, is regularly used in Djonga to mean *sin*. It also designates the offensive substance which a child or careless person may have left on the path, instead of observing the sanitary regulations of Native villages. (I. p. 311.) But in addition to biha we have *dyoha* (Dj.), *doha* (Ro.), to commit a wrong, *hona* (Ro.), *onha* (Dj.), which means to spoil, but also to sin, and from which comes *shihono*, the true word for sin in Ronga. *Somboloka* means to be irremediably bad, crooked, like a stem which cannot be straightened. 192 183 577

On the contrary the adjective *nene*, corresponding to biha, contains three meanings: good, nice, and true, the derivate *bunene* designating rather goodness and beauty, and another derivative, *psinene*, truth; the verb used for to be good is *shonga* (Ro), or *saseka* (Dj.), and has both the moral and esthetic significance. *Ku lulama* is to be straight, like a stem, and the use of this word indicates a deep and clear sense of right doing. Many other expressions might be quoted, showing that the notion of moral good and evil is certainly present in the Native mind, quite independently of that of taboo. They also recognise the *conscience* (timpfalu), seated in the diaphragm (p. 361).

2) *Intercourse with Natives* proves the same thing. Though their ideas may differ from ours as regards what is good (1), they are undoubtedly moral beings, with a more or lees developed conscience. 183 577

3) Their *folklore* is the best and most objective proof that this is so. Vice is punished and virtue rewarded in all the tales which I have called *moral*, and they certainly contain a whole code of natural and elementary morality (p. 222). The pangs of conscience in a criminal are depicted in a wonderful fashion in Zili, for instance. [538]

However, it must be confessed that this morality is low, that it does not possess a very strong hold on the Native soul, and that the imperative of conscience is by no means the categorical

(1) The idea of charity is particularly low: charity is due only to relatives, or to clansmen, and not to foreigners. I remember a man of the Mavyisa clan who nearly died near the lake of Piketla, having been hurt when working on the railway; nobody took pity on him, because he belonged to another clan. He was saved by a converted woman, Lois, who had a wonderful understanding of the new principles of universal brotherhood. 577 609